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CRITICISMS AND DISCUSSIONS.

THE PARADOXES OF PRAGMATISM.

A paradox is defined by a widely recognized authority as "an expression seemingly, though not necessarily, absurd or self-contradictory in its terms." When the intent of its language is readily apparent, the paradox may function as a vehicle for a bit of epigrammatic wisdom, or perhaps as a summary of a point of view. This may be illustrated by Oliver Wendell Holmes's comment on Berkeley to the effect that Berkeley's philosophy comprised two peculiar notions, one being that matter is nothing and the other that tar-water is everything. When the meaning is not clear, it is a potent device for arresting attention and provoking reflection and inquiry. In philosophic discussion the emergence of a paradox frequently marks the spot at which two independent lines of thought intersect. Each line has its own peculiar assumptions and to a considerable extent its own terminology. At the point of intersection, however, the two lines coincide for a moment, and one of the two becomes formulated in the language of the other. Hence the appearance of absurdity or self-contradiction, an appearance which can be removed—or else substantiated—only by a consideration and comparison of the fundamental differences in which it has its origin.

This being the case, it is to be expected in advance that a standpoint or doctrine which contravenes established credos and habits of thought will give rise to a multitude of paradoxes. Since the paradoxes bear witness to the divergence of the old and the new, they may even be used by the later philosophy to emphasize its originality. The classic instance is of course Hegelianism. From the riot of verbal contradiction there presented some have learned, indeed, to look upon all attempts at paradox with disfavor and distrust. To them it has become the index of a silly habit, not to say a disease. It is true that the paradox as an end in itself speedily becomes an offense, yet we can afford to recognize the fact that when employed

for the purpose of clarifying issues it may become an instrument of considerable merit.

To attempt an exhaustive enumeration of all the paradoxes that may be derived from pragmatic doctrine would be merely an exercise of ingenuity, similar in kind to a classification of all possible forms of nouns or of forms of logical fallacy. Some there are, however, which lie so near the surface that even a casual exploration brings them to view. We note, for example, that the pragmatist avowedly rests his case upon the deliverance of immediate experience, which would seem neither to require nor to admit of explanation. Yet we also find that he feels impelled to devote page upon page to a more or less successful elucidation of what everybody is supposed to know. We experience things just as they are, but in order to experience them we must first change them to something else. Moreover, while things are just what they are experienced as being, we may nevertheless make grievous errors concerning them, and only those who possess the correct criterion of truth and error can hope to be admitted to the temple of pragmatic wisdom. We know the world only in the form of experience, yet experience is but an incident in the course of cosmic events. Or, again, objects are known to us only in relation to the organism, yet these objects existed many ages prior to the appearance of experiencing organisms. The world, we learn, is wholly relative to our human purposes and activities, and from this relativity it is vain to seek escape, for relativity alone is absolute.

It was suggested a moment ago that in such situations the paradoxes have a common root. To explain one is in principle to explain all. Perhaps the shortest road to the heart of the matter is by way of the concept of pure or immediate experience. The most insidious of all philosophic fallacies, according to high pragmatic authority, is that of intellectualism. We easily forget that the intellect is only a tool, that it substitutes snapshot pictures for movement, cross-sections for duration, artificial boundaries and dead rigidity for everlasting flux. To know the real intimately and at first hand we must discard this conceptual machinery and plunge back into the living flow of immediacy. If we thus live the real it will reveal itself to us with a fulness and depth that passes all logical understanding.

On the surface all this may look like the dawn of an era of romanticism in philosophy. It is intimated that the dusty-minded professors who write about what other dusty-minded professors have thought, have had their day; if we are to know the truth, it seems

we must close up those barren leaves and prepare for silent communion, bringing with us only a heart that watches and receives. He that is thus equipped is in truth the best philosopher, the mighty prophet, seer blest, for on him, though deaf and silent, yet glorious in the might of heavenborn freedom, on him those truths do rest, which we are toiling all our lives to find.

Such a philosophy, however, seems to labor under the disadvantage of not being a philosophy. If immediacy is to be our touchstone, we must keep this immediacy intact at all hazards. To rationalize experience, to explicate it or accumulate knowledge about, is to transform it; which is only another way of saying that we substitute a new experience for the original one. But if this be the case, the second experience really tells us nothing about the first. The function of the truth-experience as a leading or guiding or pointing is admittedly something which does not operate through a fourth dimension to lay its hands bodily upon its object. Consequently we are shut in to the experience of the moment, and to say that there are other experiences is not so much true or false as unmeaning. It only remains to apologize for the phrase, "the experience of the moment," which is plainly unwarranted and misleading, since it implies a comparison with other experiences. Better then to desist, lest we fall into the error of the Grecian sage who wagged his fingers and thus blemished what would otherwise have been a spotless career.

Whether this is in truth the outcome of the pragmatic doctrine of immediacy is indeed a different and further question. The deductions that have just been traced have validity only when the pragmatic position is stated from the standpoint and the presuppositions of its opponents. The result of this combination is a fearful and wonderful hybrid, with which the chief of pragmatists disclaims all acquaintance, never, as he says, having met the beast. It is plain that somewhere there exist fundamental differences, which must be unearthed and set side by side, if the appearance of paradox is to be overcome.

What are we to understand by "pure" or "immediate" experience? For pragmatism—if I may venture to speak for it—the appeal to immediate experience as the final criterion means, or should mean in this connection, neither more nor less than the contention that the unknowable has no standing-ground in philosophy. Taken by itself, this doctrine has the amiableness that belongs to things trite and true, but it acquires an edge when followed by the

assertion that pragmatism is the only philosophy which does not operate with an unknown and inconceivable x in its interpretation of experience. To prove this assertion in detail is hardly possible at the present time. Such proof would require a review of the entire controversy concerning the nature of truth. But at all events the pragmatist himself has promulgated a doctrine of truth which, whatever its shortcomings, has never, so far as I am aware, been suspected of maintaining an entangling alliance with a *Ding-an-sich*. His facts are, without exception, definitely specifiable contents of experience. But his adversaries, so he contends, have persistently refused to be specific in defining the nature of truth. We all remember his oft-repeated complaint that, while his own cards are all on the table, he is compelled to play with an opponent who does not choose to show his hand.

As an illustration of the difference in standpoint, we may take the experience of recalling in memory a past occurrence. According to the more typical forms of realism, recollection involves a present consciousness which is connected with the past event by what is usually called the truth-relation. According to objective idealism, the past and the present are united in a time-transcending whole, this whole or totality being absolutely all-inclusive and constituting the basis whereon the truth-relation is founded. The pragmatist, on his part, takes the view that memory *per se* has nothing to do with truth. We have told the whole story when we say that in memory the event is experienced as having been experienced at an earlier time. To an orthodox epistemology a statement such as this is of course a scandal. What we experience in remembering must needs be a representative, or at all events a phenomenon, an appearance. Whether we set the recollection frankly over against the remembered event in a relation of "correspondence," or treat the recollection as a sort of embryonic whole, we must in any case provide a place for the relationship of truth. The relationship of correspondence, however, is, one might almost say by definition, an unexperienced and inexperienceable fact. What we are to understand by "reference" on this basis has not as yet been made intelligible. And the doctrine which holds that truth is a relation between the present experience and the complete, all-inclusive system in which it finds its fulfilment, is in no better case. If this relationship is necessary to give a meaningful character to the present experience, it is evident that the relationship is equally necessary in the case of experiences which, when tested, turn out to be erroneous.

In other words, the difference between truth and error evaporates. Moreover, the relationship in question is evidently not experienced by us, for if it were, we should be able to distinguish truth from error in advance of any process of verification. Nor can it be experienced by an absolute, since for the absolute there is no truth but only immediate intuition. And, lastly, this relation to an ideally complete totality must needs be to a considerable extent "implicit," which places it safely beyond the reach of our comprehension.

Another way of stating the divergence in point of view is to say that the pragmatist holds no theory of experience to be adequate which does not give proper recognition to its character as a temporal flux. Experience, as James says, is "always off its balance," ready at the slightest touch to change into something else. Truth is but a name for the process in which experience undergoes a specific kind of transformation. It is a process, a function, a doing, in which the end is experienced as the fulfilment of the beginning; it is not a static relationship. To treat it as static is to leave out of the reckoning this all-significant character of experience and, covertly or openly, to resign ourselves to the dubious mercies of the Unknowable. Despite the resort to a transcendental, truth finds its criterion in a beyond which is only verbally amalgamated with the present experience; the life of finite beings is hemmed in to appearances, and our ideal of truth "suffers shipwreck at the very entrance of the harbor."*

There is some reason to think that the idealist in particular has been oppressed of late years with the misgiving that all is not well with his theory. He has been at some pains to clear himself of the imputation that his theory is at bottom a correspondence theory; and in response to the gentle prodding of the pragmatist he has repeatedly affirmed that the intellect does not work in a vacuum but is intimately related to desire and will. Yet so long as an "absolute" truth is our criterion, the heart of the matter remains untouched. It is true that the idealist has been insistent these many years that we must have no dealings with what lies beyond experience. But unfortunately this insistence—which bears a certain resemblance to Rousseau's belief that he was the best of men—encounters an old-fashioned prejudice that program and performance should sustain a proper relation to each other. We hear much of system and coherence and rationality and consistency and the like, but what in detail constitutes the truth-relation or how truth is to be distinguished from error, it seems

* Joachim, *The Nature of Truth*, p. 171.

impossible to ascertain. As long as a finished and "absolute" reality or an ideally complete system is our criterion, we are of necessity forced back upon an undefined and undefinable correspondence or "agreement" as the measure of our success; and even the assurance that we are dwelling in the shadow of the sanctuary of absolute truth is small comfort for the futility of our labors. The "correspondence" is a thing-in-itself. Concerning the uselessness of the latter there is indeed much verbal agreement among philosophers; but generally speaking, we have retained the thing-in-itself, in so far as it is embodied in a mental habit, where it is insidious and dangerous, and have rejected it only as an explicitly formulated doctrine, where it is innocuous.

The whole matter becomes much more simple and manageable if we confine the truth-relation to situations in which a question is asked and answered. From this standpoint a recollection as such involves no judgment, no truth-relation to a beyond, no relation of a knower to an object. It acquires these characters only when a question is asked, when a hypothesis is entertained and tested. In such a situation there is no need to refer to an ideally complete experience, for to ask a question is in principle to suggest the process by which the hypothesis may be verified. For example, someone may mention to me a historic incident concerning which I am uncertain whether or not I have heard it before. It has a certain flavor of the "warmth and intimacy" which characterizes recognition, but I hesitate to call it such. "Do I remember it?" In asking the question I am already started on the road to verification. The question is not directed towards the universe in general, but towards certain selected portions of my past. I disregard such matters as the high cost of living, summer vacations and baseball games, and review my stock of information relating to the subject in hand. This process is not subsequent to the question and the hesitation, but it is their origin and source. "Is this object hot?" is not a significant and serious question to me, save in so far as I am already engaged in the act of touching it in order to find out. It is true of course that the test may encounter obstacles and the verification may never be completed. The point is, however, that thinking is not an independent activity, but the handmaiden of our active, non-intellectual activities. The thinking process has indeed its own principles of procedure, which we write down, more or less accurately, in our books on logic. And conformity to these principles is requisite, if the thinking is to attain its purpose. But the thinking is none the

less a tool or device. And the truth-relation has no meaning apart from this process of verification. It is wholly an intra-experiential affair; as Professor Dewey says, "the effective working of an idea and its truth are one and the same thing."¹

The appeal to immediate experience, then, is paradoxical only from a standpoint which ignores this fundamental character of flux or transformation and experienced leading. Hence the elimination of the beyond reduces our world to an aggregate of unrelated units, since the beyond is charged with the function of providing coherence and unity. From this point of view immediate experience is but a name for fictitious and impossible mental states, and to base a philosophy on them is to make bricks without straw. The pragmatist who knows his business yields precedence to no one in the repudiation of this kind of thing. His immediate experiences are not a string of detached and detachable facts, but are total situations, which are clearly objective, yet knit together in the unity which we call individuality or selfhood. The life of the individual involves continuous adjustment, and in this process the constituent factors of his experience become organized and have their status and value assigned to them. In other words, objects are not "bare" objects, but are what we find them to be by virtue of the function which they fulfil as members of an experiential situation.

From this vantage-ground we may deal more briefly with the remaining paradoxes. To make of any fact an object of knowledge is to change it; that is, to change its value and function—and hence its character—within the individual experience. If we once drop the conceptions of truth previously criticized, this change ceases to be a paradox and becomes a simple and obvious fact. Similarly, to fall into error is not to mistake an "appearance" for a "reality" which lies beyond it, but to mistake the function which the fact in question should properly perform of guiding to a further experience. And this in turn amounts to saying that we can experience things just as they are and yet make mistakes concerning them precisely because reality and truth are not the same.

The remaining paradoxes, which have a more formidable appearance, may advantageously be considered together. Our world, it was said, is wholly an experiential world, in which the bodily organism is an important factor, and yet our human experience is a late arrival upon the scene. Our knowledge, therefore, of pre-experiential facts is of necessity wholly retrospective in character;

¹ *The Influence of Darwin*, p. 143.

and thus the question arises what we are to say concerning those events which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor yet enter into the heart of man to conceive until ages after the time when they occurred.

The difficulty raised by this question turns on the fact that, according to the view here maintained, these pre-experiential things or events did not become what we now find them to be until the moment when the experience occurs. It is not until the present moment that they acquire membership in that peculiar context which as a totality we call the individual experience. If it be true that the past is also subject to the universal law of change, we are obliged to infer that the change is not completed until it has reached a culmination in experience. However true, therefore, it may be that we are now dealing with events which are genuinely past, we seem to be the victims of a peculiar hocus-pocus, the upshot of which is that a genuine past is *created* at the moment when the experience of it takes place. Or, to put it differently, we seem to have here a case where knowledge defeats its own ends. We strive to know what things are like prior to or apart from experience, but only to find that the touch of knowledge rivals the transmuting potencies of King Midas or a Bradleyan Absolute.

The difficulty, here as elsewhere, lies in the incompatibility of two divergent points of view. The chief reason, apparently, why the dependence of our experience upon a sensitive organism is considered incompatible with the knowledge of past events is the ingrained tendency to regard the relation of organism and environment as external and mechanical. If the environment is viewed as ready-made and waiting for an organism to be miraculously injected from without and become adjusted *to* it, then any changes which the organism may bring about are necessarily fatal to the purpose of knowing. From the pragmatic standpoint, however, the relation is one of mutual determination. Consciousness, on this view, is not a distinct entity, but a type of behavior, a behavior which involves on the one hand an adaptive organism and on the other hand a change in the environment, of such a kind that it controls or determines the behavior. Consciousness is thus set off from other facts by being identified with that specific process in the environment whereby the conflict of opposing tendencies, instinctive and habitual, is adjusted and harmonious response is sought or secured. The basis of the control, then, is to be found in the attributes of objects, their hardness, their color, their distance, their age, or anything else. As long

as we avoid the objectionable doctrine of mental states, there seems to be no incompatibility between the reference to an experiencing organism and the objectivity of the experienced qualities.

The critic, however, will doubtless point out that this relationship of mutual determination does not apply to a past which antedates the experiencing organism. Even the exigencies of theory are no justification for the resurrection of a past that is long since dead and decently buried, in order to establish the relationship that is requisite for pragmatic knowing. But sober reflection casts a doubt on the correctness of this position. In some sense it is unquestionably true that the past is fixed and unchanged, *jenseits des Guten und des Bösen*. But what is that past of which the present is the culmination and the result? In discussions of time and causation it has been pointed out often enough that the future is not contained in the past as a wall is contained in the bricks out of which it is constructed. It is only a mistaken naturalism that can speak of a formula which will make the future as an open book, a formula which will enable its happy possessor to "read in his equations the day when the Greek cross shall glance again from the mosque of St. Sophia or England have burnt her last bit of coal." No intelligence, however great, could so comprehend a cross-section of cosmic history as to read in it all the details of the future. A given cause is not a cause until its effect has appeared. To call it a potential cause is merely to give it a name. In order to know the nature of anything it must be construed with reference to the result in which it terminates. It is in the result that the character of the cause finds its fruition or fulfilment. The result, moreover, does not simply endow its antecedent with the *name* of cause, but it brings to full reality the cause itself. There is thus a real identity between cause and effect. The character of transition, of coming to be, is precisely what we lose when cause and effect are arbitrarily kept asunder. "What the antecedents of anything are, not what they were, is never fully ascertainable nor fully existent except as we arbitrarily fix a date and refuse to pass beyond it. A world which has had a past is a world which will have a future. Undoubtedly its past was what it was and its future will be what it will be, but in so far as it is an evolution which has continuously a past and a future, its past is alterable and its future therefore indeterminate."²

Applying these considerations to the case in hand, we may venture the hypothesis that our knowledge of the past is a fact

² Woodbridge, *Philosophical Review*, March 1912, p. 142.

which stands to its object in the relation of consequent to antecedent, or of condition to fulfilment. Our knowledge of the past implies a change in its object, but it no more creates its object than any effect creates its cause. The past, like any other object of knowledge, acquires its status within our organized world of experience through a process of redetermination and thus appears in a rôle that is new. And if the process called knowing is genuinely an activity or change in an environment and not a passive mirroring of things, there seems to be no valid reason for calling the knowing "subjective." As was suggested before, the change in question is of such a kind as to read off the nature of things in terms of behavior. Whether we consider situations of simple attention or situations that involve deliberation and choice, we find a peculiar correlation of object and response which gets adequate recognition from no other theory. That experienced objects should inevitably function as constituents of a situation so completely permeated by the "personal equation" is not a fact to be deplored, but is precisely what is necessary to realize the end for which the experience takes place. It is only by becoming constituents of such situations that objects can reveal themselves. To ask what things are like apart from this change is like asking what a cause as cause is like apart from its effect. The cause as cause is a condition of the effect, and similarly the past must be described as a condition of the present experience.³ True knowledge is adequacy of function in the control of response, and apart from this it can have no defensible meaning.

Experience, then, regarded as a temporal event, means that the things experienced take on a peculiar function, having reference to the control of bodily response. This function is part of the bone and tissue of things as experienced. As was indicated in the discussion of the truth-relation, the experienced object is immersed in the "free water of consciousness"; its being is a perpetual becoming; it never passively exists, but constantly acts. This intangible character of experienced objects, which we mutilate in the very description that we give of it, is what constitutes the experiencing of objects. Since experience is not imposed upon objects from without by the introduction of a distinct something called consciousness, but is a change which the objects undergo in order to guide more efficiently the behavior of organisms, the question whether this change

³ Cf. Dewey, *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Sc. Methods*, 1906, p. 253.

conceals the nature of the objects can hardly be considered relevant. The change is precisely what makes possible both the question and the answer; as James remarks, there is no difference between the object as it was and the object as it is, when once the question is asked.

It is along these general lines that pragmatism seeks, and must seek, to reconcile the relativity of our experience to the bodily organism with genuine objectivity. Whether it can give a consistent interpretation of all the facts which it behooves philosophy to consider is a question which the future alone can determine. The only criticism, however, that can be effective is a criticism which meets it on its own ground, for in philosophy of all subjects there is a sad truth in the remark of Mrs. Carlyle that "it is the mixing of things that is the great bad."

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PROFESSOR JAMES AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION.

The psychology of religion is the distinctly American contribution both to psychology and to the study of religion. The Germans have now taken up the subject in their characteristically thorough manner, and a journal, *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie*, is being published, whose purpose it is to collect authentic data of the religious experience. But it still remains true that one needs only English in order to read the authorities in this field.

To Prof. William James more than to any other worker in this field is to be ascribed the wide present-day interest in the psychological study of religion. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* appeared only eleven years ago, but within this brief time a new branch of psychology has been fully established and a considerable literature upon the subject has sprung up. At least two other important studies had been published before this one, but it was only with its appearance that a clearly defined and wide-spread movement was started, the object of which was to collect, analyze and describe the data of religion, and to attempt to interpret and evaluate these data in their relation to the rest of human life.

Professors Starbuck and Coe¹ seem to have been the first psy-

¹ E. D. Starbuck, *A Study of Conversion*, 1897, and *Psychology of Religion*, 1899; George A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life*, 1900.